

# Scherpontwerp



GRAPHIC DESIGNERS  
EINDHOVEN, THE NETHERLANDS  
SQUARE FOOTAGE: 1,800  
NUMBER OF WORKERS: 6-9



DECOR ELEMENT THAT SAYS IT ALL: Duh  
FIRST THING TO BE RESCUED IN A FIRE:  
The computer  
ON THE STEREO: Pussycat Dolls

In 2005, Marc Koppen and David van Iersel, principals of the graphic design firm Scherpontwerp, signed a five-year lease (a common duration) for studio space in Eindhoven, the Netherlands. Because they would be occupying the office only briefly, they didn't want to invest a fortune in renovating it. They approached the Dutch/Belgian architectural team of Ad Kil and Ro Koster with a budget of 30,000 euros (543,780) and in return received an interior that had transience written all over it. The 1,800-square-foot space is composed of 7,000 pieces of honeycomb cardboard, which were impregnated with a chemical compound to make them inflammable and glued together to form partitions, desks, and storage units.

Abbreviated tenancies and conflagration possibilities aside, cardboard suits Scherpontwerp. "The new office was dull," Van Iersel says. "It needed soul." Besides, the studio maintains rough-and-ready clients, like the European cup-winning soccer club PSV Eindhoven, the famous (at least, in the Netherlands) stand-up comedian Theo Maassen, and the you-want-cheap? go-put-it-together-yourself emporium Ikea.

According to Van Iersel, the monotony of endless cardboard provides a soothing counterbalance to the many distracting curves and alcoves that came with the space. (The material also has nice sound-dampening properties). Not only do the paper walls and bookcases offer the relief of linearity, but the architects also took a cue from Central Park, a calm spot in a frenetic city, and put a large rectangular table in the center of the room to serve as temporary desk space for interns as well as a surface on which the designers can spread out project drawings. (The tabletop is Pertinax, a paper-based material used for printed circuit boards.) The partners looked around for cardboard office chairs that would comply with rigid Dutch laws governing workplace ergonomics but couldn't find any. (Note to Vitra: Frank Gehry's Wiggle chair didn't qualify.)

Now halfway through the lease, the cardboard has begun to fade and shows wear at its edges. For Scherpontwerp, it's all a happy reflection of people hard at work.  
[www.scherpontwerp.nl](http://www.scherpontwerp.nl) — MARC VLEMMINGS